



# ATF News

**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
Houston Field Division**

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## **ATF NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM ACTIVATED TO KOUNTZE CHURCH FIRE**

KOUNTZE, Texas – The National Response Team (NRT) of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and ATF special agents from the Beaumont Field Office have been activated to assist the Kountze Fire Marshal in the investigation of a fire that occurred at the First Baptist Church, Sat., April 12, 2008. The team of about two dozen agents and specialists started its scene investigation this morning.

“ATF is assisting the Kountze Fire Marshal and Police Department in this joint investigation. We will work together to determine the origin and cause of this fire,” said Dewey Webb, Special Agent in Charge of the ATF Houston Field Division, who estimates that damage to the church, located at 100 East Monroe, exceeds \$4 million.

In 1978, ATF developed the NRT to assist federal, state and local investigators in meeting the challenges faced at the scenes of significant arson and explosives incidents. The NRT consists of four teams organized geographically to cover the United States. Each team can respond within 24 hours to assist state and local law enforcement/fire service personnel in onsite investigations.

In addition to investigating hundreds of large fire scenes, the NRT has also been activated to scenes such as the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing and the 9/11 Pentagon crash site, as well as explosions at explosives and ammunition manufacturing plants, legal fireworks factories and illegal explosive device manufacturing operations.

The teams are each composed of veteran special agents who have post blast and fire origin-and-cause expertise; forensic chemists; explosives enforcement officers; fire protection engineers; accelerant detection canines; explosives detection canines; intelligence support, computer forensic support and audit support. The teams work alongside state and local officers in reconstructing the scene, identifying the seat of the blast or origin of the fire, conducting interviews, and sifting through debris to obtain evidence related to the bombing/arson.

Further complementing the team's efforts are technical, legal and intelligence advisors. Moreover, a fleet of fully equipped response vehicles strategically located throughout the United States is available to provide logistical support.

This will be the NRT's 11th activation this fiscal year and the 650<sup>th</sup> activation since the inception of the NRT in 1978.

ATF is the federal agency with jurisdiction for investigating fires and crimes of arson. More information on ATF can be found at [www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov).

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